

# DISABILITY & HEALTH DISPARITIES

## Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

### More Common Than You Think

Most people will have a disability at some point during their life. In Washington State, more than one in five adults has a disability. People with disabilities are often underserved by the public health and health care systems. Because people with disabilities may have limited access to public health and clinical services, they may be at higher risk for other health problems, and face disadvantages in overall health and well-being.

### Topics

This is the first of a series of fact sheets comparing the health and health behaviors of adults ( $\geq 18$  yrs) in Washington State with and without disabilities. Fact sheet topics include:

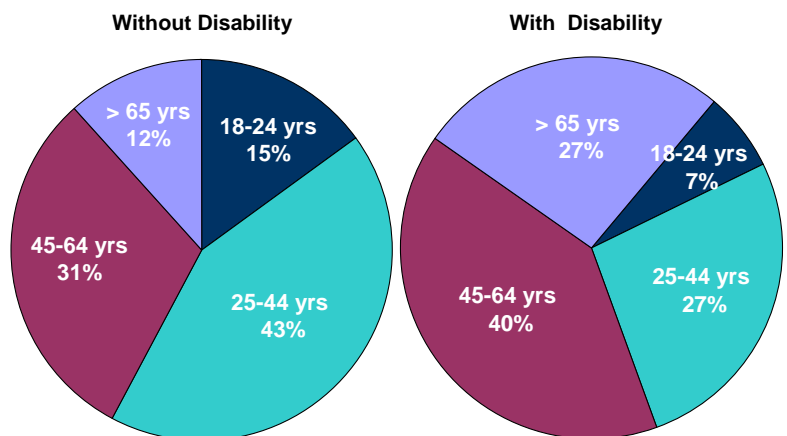
- Overview of Adult Health
- Access to Health Care
- Cancer Risks and Screening
- Heart Disease and Stroke
- Obesity and Physical Activity
- Injury and Violence
- Oral Health
- Tobacco Cessation

### Who in Washington Has a Disability?

In 2004, 22.5% of adults in Washington State had a disability. Compared to people without disabilities, those with disabilities were:

- Older, on average.
- More likely to be white, non-Hispanic.
- Less likely to have graduated from college or obtained an advanced degree.
- More likely to be unemployed or unable to work.
- More likely to live in a household with low income.

Age by Disability, 2004



Characteristics	Disability	No Disability	Total
<b>Race &amp; Ethnicity</b>			
White, non-Hispanic	86.5%	80.4%	81.8%
<b>Education</b>			
College Graduate	30.8%	40.6%	38.2%
<b>Employment (18-64yrs)</b>			
Employed	52.4%	73.7%	69.5%
<b>Income</b>			
< \$25,000	37.9%	22.1%	25.7%

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## Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

### What is BRFSS?

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System is an ongoing telephone survey of Washington residents age 18 years and older. The Washington State Department of Health uses the BRFSS to monitor important health behaviors in order to better understand health risk exposure, health promotion, and disease prevention among the population. Data from the 2003 and 2004 surveys were used to create this series of fact sheets.



### Definition of Disability

The 2003 and 2004 Washington State BRFSS included two items to identify respondents with disabilities. A person was defined as having a disability if he or she reported:

- Being limited in activities because of physical, mental, or emotional problems, or
- Having health problems that require them to use special equipment.

### Technical Notes

Significance of relationships was assessed using the Mantel-Haenszel chi-square test. All statistical comparisons discussed herein were significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ). Figures show the 95% confidence intervals around sample estimates. These confidence intervals represent a range of values within which we can be 95% sure the true value for the population lies. If confidence intervals do not overlap, the values are considered to be statistically different.

### Thank You!

These fact sheets were developed by the University of Washington Center for Disability Policy and Research and the Washington State Department of Health, Genetic Services Section. We would like to thank all those who provided feedback on the fact sheets, including the Assessment Unit and Children with Special Health Care Needs Program at the Department of Health.

These fact sheets are available on the Genetic Services Section website at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/genetics>.

### Questions or Comments?

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